

Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers January 3, 2005

NETS Feature

10th Annual Michigan Traffic Safety Summit

Save the Dates, March 1-2, 2005 for the 10th Annual Michigan Traffic Safety Summit taking place at the Sheraton Lansing Hotel in Lansing, Michigan. The summit is sponsored by the Michigan State Police, Office of Highway Safety Planning • Michigan Department of Transportation • Governor's Traffic Safety Advisory Commission. For additional information regarding registration and conference agenda please refer to.... http://www.michigan.gov/msp/0,1607,7-123-1593_3504---,00.html

ROAD TO SAFETY: Chances Are They've Tested Your Car

Though many car buyers dream of smooth styling, horsepower and low-engine torque, the federal government is trying to get people to think more about safety.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) Web site, www.safercar.gov, may be just what consumers have been asking for from the government— an easy-to-use site where you can go to get the most recent crash test and rollover ratings and information on other vehicle safety-related topics.....more http://www.trafficsafety.org/newsletter/1_1_05a.asp

Latest Traffic Safety News

AAA: Record Holiday Roadway Travel In 2004

Record roadway travel was expected this holiday season according to information gathered by Automobile Association of America (AAA) and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Nearly 51 million motorists were expected to take to the roadways, up 2.9 percent from last year's figures. This marks the largest number of motorists in AAA's 11 years of holiday travel forecasts. NHTSA projected that 820 fatalities would occur during these travels and 45 percent of these would involve an impaired driver. Read the full article at <http://www.theautochannel.com/F/news/2004/12/15/304300.html>

FindLaw: One In Five Americans Has Driven After Drinking

According to a new poll by the legal website FindLaw.com, 20 percent of Americans admitted to driving after drinking within the past year. NHTSA estimates that 410 people will die in traffic crashes during the upcoming New Year's holiday. Furthermore, fatal traffic crashes during the New Year's holiday are 40 percent more likely than non-holiday days to involve at least one alcohol-impaired driver. The survey results found that one in five Americans admitted to driving after drinking in the past year. Most said they drove after consuming one or two drinks, while only 3 percent of those surveyed said they consumed three or more drinks prior to driving. Read the release at <http://www.automotive.com/news/25/9033/index.html>

New Report Examines State Highway Safety Laws

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety recently released a report examining the status of highway safety laws in the states and the District of Columbia. The 2005 Roadmap to State Highway Safety Laws looks at various topics including seat belt use enforcement, motorcycle helmets, teen driving,

booster seats, and impaired driving. View the full report at
<http://www.saferoads.org/Roadmap2005.pdf>

Warning System Anticipated To Reduce Trucking Insurance Costs

New automotive technology that is able to detect and warn drivers of potential crash risks may be the solution for insurance companies in the heavy duty trucking industry. Due to high risk and costly settlements, many insurance companies are dropping coverage for the industry and even fleets with good driving records are now vulnerable. The new technology is able to record driving patterns in real-time video and allows employers to provide feedback for improving driver performance. It also includes a vision system, which provides forward-looking, rear-looking, and in-cabin applications to help warn drivers if they're engaging in risky driving behaviors. Read the full article at
<http://www.ctl.ca/article.asp?id=38116&issue=12202004>

New Poll Reveals Car Buyers Technology Desires

A new Harris Interactive poll surveyed 14,424 Internet users to find out which of 50 technologies today's car buyers knew about, cared about, and would be willing to buy. Topping the list of customer demands were better gas mileage and safety technologies. Survey respondents were indifferent to technology that could automatically park a car, detect a trapped child, prevent a drunk driver from starting a car, or increased security by reinforcing window glass against break-ins. The survey also found that while customers are interested in buying hybrid gas-electric vehicles, fuel cell vehicles, and "clean diesel" technology, they expect to pay less than the current asking price. Read the full article at
<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/12/15/automobiles/15AUTO-SPECIAL.html?ex=1260939600&en=08194d6d7e284f8d&ei=5090&partner=rssuserland>

Cell Phone Conversation Disrupts Change Detection In Traffic Scenes

A recent set of studies conducted at the University of Urbana-Champaign at Illinois examined the effects of cognitive distraction of cell phone use and conversation on visual scanning and change detection in natural traffic scenes. One of the studies found that a hands-free cell phone conversation could disrupt change detection and also revealed a tendency for conversation to impair the attention of older adults.

Source: Human Factors and Ergonomics Society Author: J.S. McCarley, M.J. Vais, H. Pringle, A.F. Kramer, D.E. Irwin, D.L. Strayer

Automotive Industry Looking To Protect Drivers From Themselves

According to NHTSA, there were 6.57 million police-reported traffic crashes in the United States in 2002, up from 6.32 million in 2001. However, many safety groups say that the number of motor vehicle crashes in the United States is more accurately about 16 million per year. The numbers are much worse in other areas of the world experiencing rapidly emerging automakers. China, for example, reports 300 traffic-related deaths daily. The World Health Organization estimates that 1.2 million people worldwide die in traffic crashes every year. Now, auto industry executives are saying that new criteria for vehicle performance must include a vehicle's ability to protect its occupants in a crash or avoid a crash from occurring in the first place. Read the full article at
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A34422-2004Dec4.html>

Ex-Lawmaker Settles Alleged Distracted Driving Suit, Faces Jail Time

A former Congressman from Oklahoma has agreed to a \$2 million settlement in connection with a fatal car crash in which driver cell phone use was allegedly to blame and now faces possible jail time over charges of negligent homicide. The two-count misdemeanor charge carries a maximum fine of \$1,000 and up to a year of imprisonment. The traffic crash killed a married couple and injured their two children traveling in the car.

Cameras, Sensors Make Backing Up Safer

Approximately 6,000 people are injured each year in vehicle backovers and an additional 120 people, mostly young children and the elderly, are killed, according to NHTSA. To prevent these incidents, several automakers offer warning and visual devices on their vehicles. The most popular options is a sensor that either beeps or talks to the driver when an object is in its path. Another option growing in popularity is mounted cameras on the back bumper that send images to screens on the dashboard or rearview mirror. Read the full article at

http://www.freep.com/news/statewire/sw108551_20041211.htm

Automotive “Black Boxes” Fail To Create Peace Of Mind For All Drivers

The “black box” or Event Data Recorder (EDR) can record a vehicle’s speed, acceleration, braking, steering, and seat belt use. In the “event” of a crash, the EDR can move the last several seconds of recorded information into long-term storage for later downloading. Despite the safety benefits, EDRs are not mandated by the federal government. Some motorists fail to see the safety aspect of EDRs and instead are alarmed by their surveillance capabilities. Prosecutors are using the information gathered from EDRs as evidence against drivers, some states are considering using EDRs to instate a mileage tax, and car rental companies are using EDRs to track renters’ driving behaviors and imposing fines for speeding and other violations. For more information visit <http://www.cato.org/dailys/12-12-04.html> and <http://www.csmonitor.com/2004/1227/p13s01-wmgn.html>

Companies Strive To Bring Internet, Satellite TV To Cars

As part of the “rear-seat entertainment market,” which targets hyperactive children and bored teenagers, tech companies are on the brink of bringing satellite television and broadband Internet to cars. Read the full article at [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A60138-](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A60138-2004Dec12.html)

[2004Dec12.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A60138-2004Dec12.html)

TRB Releases Training For Night Road Work To Improve Safety, Operations

The Transportation Research Board (TRB) is releasing a new training program to improve the safety and operations of night road work. The new program complements the agency’s other two training packages that address nighttime highway construction, maintenance, and traffic control. View TRB’s National Cooperative Highway Research Program Research Results Digest 293: Training Program for Night Road Work to Improve Safety and Operations at

http://trb.org/publications/nchrp/nchrp_rrd_293.pdf

Simulated Driving Study Explores Alcohol Effects On Brain Activation

As driving while intoxicated continues to be a major public health problem, a new study recently examined alcohol intoxication effects on simulated driving. The study involved a simulated driving skill game that presented an ‘in-car’ view of a road and a readout of speed. The investigators explored brain activation and behavioral alterations at two blood alcohol concentrations (BACs) of 0.04 and 0.08 and found that alcohol demonstrated some behavioral effects and unique, disruptive effects within several brain circuits.

Source: Olin Neuropsychiatry Research Center Authors: V.D. Calhoun, J.J. Pekar, G.D. Pearlson

Optimal Driving Conditions Increase Child Pedestrian Crash Risk

Motor vehicle-pedestrian crashes are one of the leading causes of serious injury in children. While previous studies have focused on child and traffic factors contributing to these crashes, a new study examined the role of driving conditions. This study found that pediatric pedestrian crashes are common and occur most frequently during optimal driving conditions—in good lighting, on a dry road, and during good weather. The data also suggested that these incidents are related to the saturation of

streets with children. The study concluded that prevention efforts should stress that optimal driving conditions also present optimal play conditions for children and this increased exposure may increase the risk for motor vehicle pedestrian crashes involving children. Source: Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Authors: M.L. Nance, L.A. Hawkins, C.C. Branas, C. Vivarelli-O'Neil, F.K. Winston

IIHS: Most Crash Deaths, Collisions With Animals Are Avoidable

According to new research by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), most crash deaths and collisions with animals are avoidable and if more occupants wore seat belts and if motorcyclists used helmets, many of the deaths wouldn't occur. IIHS found that in animal-vehicle crashes, 60 percent of people killed weren't wearing seat belts and 65 percent of people killed on motorcycles weren't wearing helmets. For more information visit

http://www.iihs.org/news_releases/2004/pr111804.htm

New Study Finds Non-Helmeted Motorcyclists Costly To Society

Helmet laws remain a controversial issue in the United States. Opponents argue that statistics fail to consider the impact of alcohol or drug use. Using the National Trauma Data Bank, a new study evaluated the effect that helmet use had upon injury severity and the effects that alcohol and/or drugs had on mortality. The study found that non-helmeted motorcyclists have worse outcomes than helmeted motorcyclists independent of the use of alcohol or drugs. In addition, the research suggests that non-helmeted motorcyclists monopolize more hospital resources, incur higher hospital charges, and frequently do not have insurance.

Source: Wake Forest University School of Medicine, Departments of General Surgery and Public Health Sciences Authors: J.C. Kilgo, P.D. Miller P.R. Miller, M.C. Chang, R.A. Hensberry, J.W. Meredith, J.J. Hoth

News from USDOT

FHWA Launches Updated Safety Website

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) updated its Safety Website. The updated site is designed to emphasize the FHWA's safety focus areas of roadway departure crashes, intersection fatalities, pedestrian safety, and a comprehensive approach to safety. Visit the site at

<http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/>

USDOT Seeking Safety System Input From Fleet Managers

The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) is requesting fleet executives to voluntarily complete a survey assessing the issues concerning the integration of vehicle safety systems on commercial vehicles. According to USDOT officials, the results of the survey would help the agency outline a plan to integrate systems such as rollover warning, collision avoidance, and lane-drift detection in a way that is commercially feasible for fleets. For more information and to view the survey visit

http://fleetowner.com/news/dot_safety_systems_survey_120204/

Despite Efforts, One In Three Recalled Vehicles Go Unrepaired

According to NHTSA, only 72 percent of vehicles are repaired each year. Based on this figure of the 19.1 million vehicles recalled in 2003, 5.3 million were never repaired. Automakers are required to give NHTSA repair data for six quarters after they send a notification letter to owners. If repair rates are exceptionally low, NHTSA will occasionally require an automaker to send a second notice. Since 1966 federal law has required automakers to provide free repairs for safety-related defects. Read the full article at <http://www.messenger-inquirer.com/features/business/7883095.htm>

Research To Focus On Keeping Kids Safe In Cars Designed For Adults

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for Americans age 1-34, according to NHTSA. Many advances have been made in helping occupants survive and even avoid traffic crashes, including air bags in ceilings, seat belts that grab harder before impact, and cruise control that senses vehicles in the roadway ahead. However, most of these innovations have been aimed at adults, and in some cases can actually pose as hazards to children. The number of children 15 and younger killed in traffic crashes nationwide rose last year from 2,550 to 2,570, yet this doesn't include the number of children who were killed in driveways, garages, and parking lots, which the government doesn't officially count. Now, NHTSA is studying ways to track such dangers and gather more reliable statistics about motor vehicle incidents involving children. Safety advocates hope that the development of dependable data will help press automakers to improve child passenger safety. Read the full article at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A34421-2004Dec4.html>

New Session Of Congress Must Start Over On Highway Funding Bill

Congress did not pass legislation authorizing new multi-year transportation spending before adjourning last week. The 109th Congress will have to start over with the measure after it convenes in January. Both the Senate and the House passed different versions of the legislation. The joint conference committee failed to work out a compromise with the bill's overall spending level the main issue of debate.

FMCSA Give Truck Drivers The Seat Belt Challenge

Prompted by a national study that found that only 48 percent of all truck drivers wear seat belts, the USDOT has created a public-private partnership, the Commercial Motor Vehicle Safety Belt Partnership (NETS is a member of this coalition). In 2003, of the 620 commercial drivers killed in crashes, about half were not wearing seat belts and 135 were ejected. Because not wearing a seat belt effects everyone including family and loved ones, the new Partnership is asking truckers to think about the effect on their spouse or children if they were killed or seriously injured in a crash as a result of not wearing a seat belt. For more information visit www.fmcsa.dot.gov/safetybelt/naps_article_nov_26_Q_and_A.pdf

International Traffic Safety News

UK Study: Risk Assessment Is Number One Priority For Fleets

A new study based on the findings of LeasePlan and The Financial Times found that reducing employee liability costs through risk management programs has become a key priority for UK fleets as they move into 2005. Still, a recent survey found that 58 percent of employers lack formal risk assessment procedures for staff driving on company business. Forty three percent of the respondents said that health and safety of their employees is their greatest employee liability concern. The study notes that when companies consider the safety and health of their employees, vehicles should be at the top of the list.

UK Considers Adding Declaration of Safety To Common Expense Forms

In an effort to meet new duty of care standards, UK fleets are considering adding a health and safety declaration to mileage expense and claim forms. The proposed measure is specifically targeted to those employees using their personal vehicles for business-related purposes. Drivers would also have to attest that their car was registered with the proper authorities, insured, and roadworthy.

Rear Seat Belt Use Reduces Injury Severity Of Front Seat Occupants

A new report by Japan's Institute for Traffic Accident Research and Data Analysis examines the effect of rear seat belt use on the injury severity of front seat occupants. Rear passengers who do not use seat belts can not only cause harm to themselves, but may also endanger front seat occupants. The report focuses on the tendency of front seat occupants to sustain severe injuries due to forward movement of passengers in rear seats and evaluates the effectiveness of reducing such injuries by having rear passengers wear their seat belts. Using statistical data from Japan, the paper concluded that the number of killed or seriously injured drivers is estimated to decrease by 25 percent if rear passengers wore seat belts.

Source: Institute for Traffic Research and Data Analysis Authors: M. Shimamura, M. Yamazaki, G. Fujita

Study Examines Factors Influencing The Use Of Cell Phones While Driving

A new study conducted in Finland addressed the strategic decision to not use a cell phone while driving and phone-related driving hazards among those drivers who do. A representative sample of 834 licensed drivers who own a mobile phone were interviewed on their phone use and hazards, background factors, and self-image as a driver. Previous models have found that older age, female gender, occupation, and driver inexperience, as well as low skill level and high safety motivation, promoted the decision to not use a cell phone. Among those who used a cell phone while driving, risk exposure is highest among those of young age, leading occupational position, and low safety motivation. Neither gender nor driving skill level had any effect on self-reported hazards.

Source: Central Organization for Traffic Safety in Finland Authors: L. Poysti, S. Rajalin, H. Summala

Report Examines Australian Novice Driver Coaching Program

The Australian Transport Safety Bureau released a report examining its Novice Driver Coaching Program, including the rationale for the content, orientation, and emphasis of the program. The Novice Driver Coaching Program is a best practices driver education and development program for Australian novice drivers or those with about six months of independent driving experience. View the full report at <http://www.atsb.gov.au/road/res-exec/cr222ex.cfm>

Study: Developing Countries Need To Establish Rear Seat Belt Laws

Injuries from traffic crashes are expected to become the second highest cause of death in developing countries. Research indicates that wearing a seat belt is the best defense to preventing injury and death in a traffic crash. This is true for rear and front occupants. A study based in the country of Oman examined the use of seat belts in cars entering a university and hospital campus to determine the seat belt rate for rear passengers. In Oman, wearing a seat belt is mandatory for front seats, but not rear seats. Of the 1,066 vehicles that were stopped, only 1.4 percent of rear seat passengers were wearing a seat belt, only 3.7 percent of children under the age of 5 were restrained in a child seat, and only 16.7 percent of 5 to 12 year olds were strapped in. The study suggests that traffic regulations need to be updated and the public needs to be educated about the importance of wearing seat belts.

Source: Royal Society for the Promotion of Health Authors: S. McIlvenny, F. Al Mahrouqi, T. Al Nabhani, F. Al Hikmani, Z. Al Kharousi, S. Al Mammari, A. Al Hoti, A. Al Shihi, A. Al Lawati, I. Al Kharousi

EU Aims To Reduce Road Casualties By 50 Percent

Transportation officials in the European Union (EU) have agreed to a new road safety strategy that aims to reduce the number of people killed and injured in motor vehicles by 50 percent by the year 2010. The strategy stresses cross-border enforcement initiatives and the exchange of best practices. Technological advancements are expected to play a large role and involve fitting vehicles with automatic speed control systems, speed warning or speed limiting devices, alcohol ignition locks, and

seat belt reminders. For more information visit

<http://www.euractiv.com/Article?tcmuri=tcm:29-133380-16&type=News>

European Automakers Launch Car-To-Car Communications Network

Leading European automakers are joining forces on an effort that allows cars to transmit wireless warnings of danger to surrounding motorists. Using common technical standards and assigned frequencies, the "car-to-car network" would activate if vehicles encountered thick fog, sheet ice, or crashes on European roadways. Although years away from entering service, the project envisions installing wireless communications devices in cars that would transform every vehicle into a sender, receiver, or router of emergency information.

The Case Of The Speedy Fleet Driver And The Flash-less Speed Camera

A UK fleet driver accumulated more than 30 points on his driving license in one week as he traveled to and from work. The driver passed a speed camera at a speed greater than the 40 mph limit and because it didn't flash, concluded that the camera wasn't working. He repeated his journey at least once a day for a full week before penalty notices started arriving. The speed camera was in fact a digital camera and caught the driver every time he sped past it. The driver is now appealing against the points and is arguing that he thought the cameras were supposed to flash.

Saudi Arabia To Focus On Reducing Traffic Deaths, Injuries

Transportation officials are issuing a warning that traffic crashes in Saudi Arabia could rise by 30 percent in the next 10 years unless urgent remedial measure are taken. In 2001, there were 1,350 deaths caused by traffic crashes and an additional 5,400 were injured. Speeding and running red lights are the primary causes of these crashes, according to officials. To combat roadway casualties, the traffic department has imposed strict penalties and is organizing awareness programs, introducing new road safety equipment, and instituting an evaluation process. Read the full article at

<http://www.arabnews.com/?page=1§ion=0&article=55885&d=11&m=12&y=2004&pix=kingdom.jpg&category=Kingdom>

Study: Naps Reduce Crash Risk Among Shift Workers

A new study evaluated the role naps play in preventing sleep-related traffic crashes involving Italian shift-working police officers and found them to be a successful countermeasure in reducing such crashes by 48 percent. In fact, the data confirmed that napping before working at night is an effective countermeasure to alertness and performance deterioration associated with night work and in reducing the number of traffic crashes.

Source: American Academy of Sleep Medicine Authors: S. Garbarino, B. Mascialino, M.A. Penco, S. Squarcia, F. De Carli, L. Nobili, M. Beelke, G. Cuomo, F. Ferrillo